

March 12, 2023
Third Sunday of Lent

Meditation: "Water we missing?"

He roused his travelling companions in the early pre-dawn. The sky was turning from black to dark blue. They had a long way to walk and he was anxious to get started. He knew the sky would be tinged with pink before they left Jerusalem. It was 90 miles to Nazareth. It would take them two long days of walking, and they had to pass through Samaria, which lay between Judea and Galilee. He didn't relish spending any longer than absolutely necessary in Samaria, for Jews and Samaritans didn't get along well. It was time to get up and be on their way.

Setting a brisk pace during the cool of the morning had paid off. In only eight hours they had managed to get to the outskirts of Sychar, or Shechem as it was also known. They still had miles to go that day, but now they were in the heat of the day. They were weary, overheated, and their tongues stuck in their mouths. They had had little to eat before they left Jerusalem, and now they were famished, but even more than that, they were parched. He couldn't go another step, so he stopped and sat at the edge of the well. He sent his travelling companions on to find food in the town ahead, while he worked up the energy to draw water from the well.

I started thinking about water? Do you know what happens when we get dehydrated? Other than the obvious, your mouth feels dry and thick, you can also feel fatigued, have a headache, feel light headed or dizzy, get confused, your skin can get dry, your immune system doesn't function well, you can even get heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and in extreme cases you can suffer from potentially life-threatening heatstroke.

So how much water do we need to stay alive and well? According to the National Academy of Science, Engineering and Medicine in the US, the average male needs about 15.5 cups (3.7 litres) of fluids a day, or for you women, about 11.5 cups (2.7 litres) of fluids a day to stay adequately

hydrated. That fluid could be water, but it can also come from eating fruits and vegetables, or other liquids other than water, like milk or juice.

A woman came to the well to draw water. He knew she was not accepted by the others in town, otherwise she would have drawn water early in the day with the other women. He still hadn't worked up the energy to draw water on his own, besides, he didn't have a container to draw water with, so he asked her for a drink. Jesus was dangerously dehydrated.

I guess the modern equivalent would be for an Israeli to ask a Palestinian for a drink today. Water has always been a precious commodity in the middle east, but is particularly so in present day Palestinian Territories. Israelis control the water in the Jordan, in the Mountain Aquifer, and in the Coastal Aquifer. Palestinians have to buy their water from Israel, at inflated prices. The average Israeli has access to about 240 litres of water a day. The average illegal Israeli settler in the Palestinian Territories has access to about 300 litres of water per day. The United Nations says the daily minimum of potable water for drinking, bathing, and cooking is 100 litres a day. The average Palestinian has access to only 73 litres of water a day.

I guess the local equivalent would be for one of us to go to the Oneida of the Thames and ask for a drink of water. Despite the fact that all of the surrounding non-indigenous communities have access to clean, safe drinking water, the Oneida of the Thames do not. They buy their water in bottles or by the tanker load. Fortunately, multiple levels of government have stepped up and a new connection to the water pipeline from Lake Huron will be started this spring to ensure that the Oneida also have clean safe drinking water.

Some would say that water is a right. I wouldn't say it is a right, but it is a fundamental need. Without water, we would not last longer than three days. So, what are we missing? Access to an adequate supply of clean

safe drinking water is a justice issue. What is happening in Israel and Palestine is an injustice. And don't try to tell me that I'm being anti-Semitic for calling out Israel's injustice to Palestinians, because Palestinians are also Semitic peoples.

Likewise, what is happening in First Nations across this country is a justice issue. The federal government promised to fix the problem of access to potable water in First Nations communities across the country years ago. While some communities now have access, far too many are still waiting for something they need every day, just to stay alive.

What are we missing? Why is it that access to potable water for our downstream neighbours isn't important to us? Why is it that we just sit on our hands pretending there isn't a problem? When God made us stewards of creation, that includes one another, for we too are part of God's creation.

What are we missing? Like the woman at the well, we all too often forget that not only are we physical beings with physical needs, but we are also spiritual beings with spiritual needs. We need h₂o for our bodies, but we also need living water for our souls.

Jesus offered the woman at the well living water that would become a spring of water gushing up to eternal life. Jesus offers no less to us. May we drink deeply of the well of living water.